A 10.

SERMON

BY A LATE

Reverend Divine

OF THE

CHURCH

OF

ENGLAND.

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SERMON, &c.

1 *Cor.* iii. 11.

For other Foundation can no Man lay, than that is laid, which is Jeſus Chriſt.

THERE have been but few Men ſo extravagant in Opinion, as to deny that the Supreme Author of the Univerſe may deſervedly demand Worſhip and Adoration from his Creatures. That that Being which not only brought us out of Nothing into Life, but which likewiſe by his ſecret Influence perpetually exerting itſelf upon us, is every Moment the Support of that Life he has given, may juſtly expect our Praiſes and Acknowledgments for the Bleſſings he beſtows.

THIS meets with but little Oppoſition amongſt thoſe who ſeriouſly conſider their immediate Dependance on Almighty GOD. But in what Manner and Form theſe religious Duties are to be offered, has not only been controverted by private Perſons, but whole Nations have differed in their Sentiments about Worſhip; each contending, that their own Obſervances were the only pure and undefiled.

BUT when Life and Immortality were brought to Light by our Saviour, who being intimate in his Father's Councils from all Eternity, has eſtabliſhed a Religion ſo becoming the Majeſty of Heaven, and ſo agreeable to the Nature of Man, that the Form of Worſhip and the Subſtance of Religion may now be no more diſputed: *For other Foundation can no Man lay, than that is laid, which is Jeſus Chriſt.* I ſhall endeavour to make this appear. *Firſt*, By conſidering the Excellency of the Chriſtian Religion as an Eſtabliſhment agreeable to the Relation the Creature bears to its Creator. *Secondly*, From a ſhort View of the Imperfections of other Religions, and the vain Attempts Men who have endeavoured to propagate

pagate Principles and Opinions contrary to thoſe laid down in the Goſpel.

Firſt, The Relation Man bears to his Creator, is a Condition the moſt Dependant imaginable; "for, "tis in him we live, move, and have our Being." So often therefore as we reflect upon his continual Preſervation of our Lives, as often do we confeſs an Obligation to make our grateful Returns in Praiſes and Thankſgivings. But before our Saviour's Inſtructions, the Manner of addreſſing our ſelves to a Being ſo infinitely Superior to Us, was utterly undiſcoverable by Humane Underſtanding. Mankind was always very ſenſible that Acknowledgments were due for Benefits and Mercies received, but being unacquainted with the Attributes of GOD, they knew not how to make that Gratitude acceptable: Nor indeed, cou'd it be expected from meer Man, relying ſolely upon his natural Faculties; when we find the Apoſtles, after frequent Converſation with our Saviour about thoſe Things, ſtill requeſting of him a more particular Form, leaſt they might offend, inſtead of appeaſing GOD, by much ſpeaking, or vain Repetitions; being

ing conſcious therefore, of the unſpeakable Majeſty of his Heavenly Father. He informs them, that the main Deſign of Man's Creation, was for GOD's Honour; and accordingly they inſtruct us, That the principal View of all our Actions, ſhould be the Promotion of his Glory. *Whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do elſe, do all to the Glory of GOD.*

THE Rewards indeed which are annexed to the Obſervance of his Laws, are denounced of the greateſt Goodneſs; but theſe Rewards depending entirely upon his Pleaſure, and being ſo diſproportionate to the Mint of our Lives, muſt without Controverſy be conſidered a Part from our Duty. For as we are the voluntary Product of a ſupreme, uncontroulable Maker, had not the Divine Pleaſure added eternal Life as a Conſequence of Virtue, he might ſtill have exacted of Us the ſame Obſervance of his Will, as we are now invited to by ſuch ineſtimable Advantages for the Execution of it.

THIS indeed has been denied, and it has been aſſerted, That ſerting aſide the Condition of a future State, Virtue wou'd have no Followers:

lowers: That 'tis neither the Dread of never-ending Torments, or the Proſpect of Immortality, which alone can bring it ſo many Votaries. But Virtue muſt be conſidered in the different Relations of our Duty to GOD, our Neighbour, and our Selves, and in theſe ſeveral Views, (which together, do undoubtedly comprehend the whole of Virtue) there we even in this Life receive Puniſhments, which ſeverely attend the Non-performance of it; and Rewards, which are ſufficient Obligations and Inducements for it's perpetual Practice. But thoſe Sanctions of Laws, Rewards and Puniſhments, not being in the ſtricteſt Senſe a Part of them, they can't be the Obligations for their Obſervance; but the real and true Obligation muſt ariſe from the intrinſick and abſolute Reaſonableneſs of them: And this Reaſonableneſs Virtue has an indiſputable Title to, being a complex Word to expreſs our Duty in the ſeveral Relations abovementioned, and to ſignify thoſe Laws which Almighty GOD is pleaſed to impoſe on us, as a Condition of our Lives.

But beſides theſe really amiable Perſuaſions, there are others in Virtue, by which it invites

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us to the Practice of it. If we believe the Apoſtle, it wants not its Enforcements here on Earth: For 'tis expreſly written, *That Godlineſs is profitable unto all Things, having Promiſe of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.* 1 *Tim.* iv. 8. If therefore the Obſervance of Virtue, has in this Life its Rewards, the contrary Practice we may fairly argue will bring Puniſhment upon thoſe who offend againſt it. And thus we ſhall find it, if we firſt conſider Virtue as our Duty to GOD: For we read in Scripture of impious Men, who bold diſobeying the Ordinances of their Maker, have immediately been puniſhed with Death: And certainly the Loſs of Exiſtence, (if we ſet aſide a future State) is the greateſt Misfortune and Puniſhment that can befal a living Creature.

If again, we conſider Virtue as a Duty to our Fellow-Creatures, we ſhall find that mutual good Offices to each other, procure the Happineſs and Tranquility of Mankind; and the World will afford us ten thouſand Inſtances, where thoſe who are Enemies to this friendly Diſpoſition, meet not only with Contempt and Deriſion, but likewiſe feel the real Sufferings of

of both their Lives and Fortunes. But *3dly*, To be virtuous is a Duty we owe to our ſelves; and in this there can be but little Conteſt, if not only the Peace, but alſo the Vigour and Increaſe of the Faculties of the Mind are of any Value; if the Strength and Order of the Body be any thing preferable to the Weakneſſes and Diſeaſes of it. 'Tis pretty plain, therefore, that without the Expectation of Eternity, to be Virtuous, is to be Happy; and it eaſily will be allowed by a Creature endued with Life and Thought, that to be brought out of no Exiſtence, from a State of not thinking at all; and to have Powers of Mind allowed him to contemplate the Perfection of ſo adorable a Being, even for the Time allotted him on this ſide the Grave, wou'd earneſtly be deſired to be a Recompence for Life, without looking farther into the endleſs Ages of Happineſs in another World.

But if after this, we take into Conſideration two of the Fundamental Doctrines of Chriſtianity, *viz.* The Reſurrection from the Dead, and eternal Judgment; which St. *Paul* has gi-

ven us in his 6th Chap. of his Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*. This enlarges our Conceptions of Almighty GOD, and demands our utmoſt Effuſions of Praiſe and Adoration. For to be recovered from the Grave, which we muſt ſink into by a natural Law, ariſing from our own Crimes, requires a ſecond Operation of the ſame infinite Power which firſt produced Us: And then after Judgment paſſed upon our Actions, to be continued on beyond the fartheſt Limits of Time in a State of inconceivable Felicity, is a Scene in Proſpect, which ſtrikes the Mind with ſuch a Senſe of the divine Goodneſs, that it muſt be uneaſy in its Returns of Love, while it endeavoures to anſwer in ſome Meaſure ſuch invaluable Favours. But an everlaſting Enjoyment of the divine Perfections, is an Effect which will moſt certainly follow from Days ſpent here on Earth in Piety and Religion. And to this End, GOD has created the Soul of a Subſtance capable of infinite Duration, and has given his infallible Promiſe, that he will for ever ſupport it ſecure from Deſtruction.

And this is a Reward and Expectation conformable to the Nature of Man. For to return

return again to Nothing, to think no more, is a Deſire in vicious Men only, which muſt proceed from Diſpair and Horror, and an Apprehenſion of inſupportable Vengeance. But let us examine within our ſelves, and try how we indure the uncomfortable Reflection of becoming Duſt again.

WHAT Invitations to live are even the leſs ſenſible Pleaſures of this Life? With what Reluctance and Heſitation do we often ſee a Soul removing hence, notwithſtanding it is from a Place, where it's Happineſs was ſo frequently interrupted by a Mixture of various Misfortunes? To live therefore is an Appetite naturally implanted in our Conſtitutions; and to ſatisfy this Appetite, our SAVIOUR aſſures us, that whoſoever is obedient to his Father's Ordinances, ſhall inherit eternal Life.

WHAT therefore was firſt propoſed, we evidently ſee, that the Religion taught us by CHRIST and his Apoſtles, is careful to preſerve the infinite Majeſty of Almighty GOD, whilſt it commands us to adore his Power

and Juſtice with the utmoſt Humility and Reverence; and whilſt it deſcribes him in the greater Attributes of Goodneſs and Mercy, it excites us to love him with all our Souls. 'Tis a Religion alſo, which abundantly anſwers the Nature of Man, whoſe principal Deſire is to live and to be happy: It propoſes therefore, the endleſs Fruition of the eternal Godhead, as a Recompence for a few Days ſpent in Virtue and Devotion. If therefore, an Angel from Heaven, was to preach any other Goſpel than this which is taught by our SAVIOUR, we are not to believe it.

But *Secondly*, The Truth and Excellency of Chriſtianity, may be proved from a ſhort View of the Imperfections of other Religions, and the vain Attempts of Men who have endeavoured to propagate Principles contrary to thoſe laid down in the Goſpel. To begin with that of the *Jews* upon which Chriſtianity is ingrafted.

THO' it was inſtituted in every Part by GOD himſelf, by Orders given to his Servant

vant *Moſes*, yet was it far from being perfect and unalterable. It was ſuch perhaps, as that inſenſible, perverſe Nation, was capable of receiving and obſerving. Where we find the far greater Numbers buried in Ceremonies, Sacrifices of Annals, and exteriour Worſhip, at which GOD afterwards diſcovered his Diſpleaſure: And theſe Rites and Oblations were deſigned to obtain Peace and Liberty, the promiſed Land, and other ſuch earthly Conſiderations. *Canaan* was the heavenly Soil they prayed for, and the utmoſt End of all their Devotions.

In ſhort, the *Jewiſh* Religion was only a Shadow and Prefiguration of what was to be eſtabliſhed under the *Meſſiah*; it being to bring Men out of the Depths of *Paganiſm* into the glorious Brightneſs of the Goſpel; which may not improperly be compared to the firſt Glimmerings of Light which a Man, returning out of a dark Cavern receives, before he enters into open Day. As to the *Pagan* Syſtem, or rather Confuſion of Religion, 'twas ſuch a Collection of impious and abſurd Notions, that one

one might ſuſpect them to be infuſed into their Minds by the *Devil*, rather to incenſe the true GOD, than to gratify him by their Supplications. Their moſt ſublime Rights and ſacred Myſteries, were of ſuch a Nature, that inſtead of elevating and refining, they corrupted and debaſed their Votaries even below Men, and immerſed them in all thoſe abominable Pollutions which ſober Nature abhorred.

FROM the Condition theſe Heathens were in, with a Guide and Direction to the then unknown GOD, we may naturally conclude upon the great Neceſſity of a REVELATION. For the very wiſeſt of them were ſo perplex'd with Errors and Miſtakes, about the Deity, of a future State, and the Exiſtence of a Soul in another World, that we muſt commiſerate their Uncertainty and Gueſſes. Again, when after Reflection upon themſelves, and Things about them, they had concluded upon a GOD, and heavenly Things, they fancy'd him to be ſo like Man, and feigned him to have ſuch Vanity even of ſcandalous Paſſions, that the very Heroes of their Poets were Superior to him in Piety and Virtue.

If again, we conſider the Doctrines of the the Impoſtor *Mahomet*, which have over-run ſo great a Part of the World, we ſhall find them ſo contrary to all Goodneſs, and the Rewards he propoſes in another Life, ſo vicious and ſordid, that a truly pious Man wou'd refuſe to accept em. For how ignoble is his Paradiſe, where are very high Gratifications of the ſenſual Part, and conſequently Depreſſions and Debaſements of the Rational. As a great Divine of our Church phraſes it, *He has provided a Heaven for the Beaſt, and a Hell for the Man:* Add to this the Method he allows to propate his Religion, 'tis contrived rather for the Deſtruction than Preſervation of Mankind. For to make uſe of the Sword to gain Proſelytes, is to contend for Principles, and at the ſame Time to take of thoſe who ſhou'd comply with them. Beſides, Religion is a pure Act of the Mind, and can only proceed from our own voluntary Inclinations. If therefore Force is uſed as a pretended Means, it may indeed eſtabliſh the Name of Religion, but utterly deſtroy the Subſtance of it.

THE Doctrines therefore of our SAVIOUR are only to be deſired, and their Rewards of the greateſt Conſequence; namely, the Reſurrection from the Dead, and eternal Life. The Method he has commanded us for the Eſtabliſhment of his Religion, are calculated for the Peace and Tranquility of the whole World: The Manner of offering up our Prayers to GOD, ſuch as is worthy of him to receive, when we Worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth.

A RELIGION like this, which thus enforces itſelf upou our Underſtandings, relying ſolely upon the Beauty of its Holineſs, without any additional Aſſiſtance of Arts or Arms, muſt neceſſarily ſpread itſelf as Chriſtianity has done, and in like Manner ſubdue Nations Mighty in Wiſdom and Power: And whatever is contrary to this, ſo long as Reaſon prevails, will ſoon periſh with the Contrivers of it. There have indeed been many, ſome of ſuperſtitious Imaginations, and others of ambitious Underſtandings, who have vented Doctrines in Oppoſition to thoſe of the Goſpel: But then as a juſt Conſequence, both the Authors and Doctrines have been

been delivered to us with the greateſt Contempt and Ignominy. For this is the common Fate of Hereſies, that at firſt they have blazed with a very violent Flame; but that Violence is the Cauſe of their being ſoon ſuppreſſed and extinguiſhed.

THE Application I would make from what has been ſaid, is this: That ſince GOD, out of his infinite Mercy, has been ſo kindly indulgent, as to reſtore to us his Favour, which by the Sin of our firſt Parents, we had ſo juſtly forfeited, and ſent his SON to diſcover to us the Paths of Salvation, we ſhould follow with the utmoſt Diligence the Inſtructions he has given, and uſe the Advantages of Revelation. When we reflect, that the only begotten Son of GOD, came from his eternal Throne of Glory, to ſuffer here the Scorn and ill Uſage of Sinners, whom he was about to redeem; and our very Gratitude for ſuch amazing Love, will oblige us to follow the Directions he has left us. For ſure 'twas the Wonder of Heaven as well as Earth, of Angels as well as Men, to ſee him who was before all Worlds, very God, of very God become an Infant; the high and lofty

One, who inhabits Eternity, born in Time; the Lord ſtrong and mighty, the Lord mighty in Battle, cloathed with Weakneſs; and that powerful Voice that ſhakes the Wilderneſs, and breaks the Cedars of *Lebanon*, uttering it ſelf in the feeble Cries of a new-born Babe. Let us therefore take our ſelves into Conſideration of the Advantages we ſhall gather from obſerving the Goſpel, that we ſhall live with the Author of it in perfect Bliſs to all Eternity; but if we neglect it, are now without Excuſe, and muſt expect everlaſting Torment for our diſregard of it. In our Temporal Concerns, the Favours of earthly Princes are refuſed often Times with great Inconveniences; but what Apprehenſions of Puniſhment may we not have from GOD, if we refuſe the glad Tidings of Salvation, which were ratifyed by the Blood of his beloved Son.

I SAY, let us therefore, with all Application mediate upon the Holy Scriptures, and beware of thoſe who teach for Doctrines the Commandments of Men. It is our Duty indeed, to pay a juſt Eſteem and a becoming Reverence to the Precepts of Men of Senſe and Learning

Learning in whatever Age they lived; and we ought to yield ſo much Credit both to them and their Traditions, as in all Things certain, to embrace their Judgments, in Things doubtful to conſer with them; in Things not clearly underſtood, to ſuſpend our Belief, and in Things falſe and erron eous, not to follow or truſt to 'em; as being but Men, and as ſuch, liable to Miſtakes, and ſubject to Imperfections.

My Beloved,

'If we take this Method in eſtabliſhing our 'Faith, we can never Err: If Inſtead of build-'ing on the Judgments of Men, and following 'the whimſical Notions of the giddy Multitude, 'we ſearch the Scriptures the Word of Liſe, 'and yield an implicit Faith to the Oracles of 'Heaven, we ſhall do that which is pleaſing 'and acceptable in the Sight of our Almighty 'Creator, and may expect with an Aſſurance 'becoming the Sons of GOD, the Kingdom 'prepared for us before the Foundations of the 'World, which GOD of, *&c.* *Amen.*

FINIS.

Φ. KR
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